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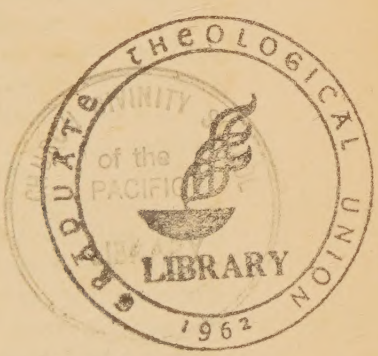

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PREFACE

THE three lectures here printed were delivered in Westminster Abbey on Saturday afternoons in Advent, 1903. I have added to them a sermon preached before the University of Cambridge on the first Sunday after Trinity, 1904, and also some words spoken at the London Diocesan Conference in 1901 in deprecation of a proposal for the re-translation of the Athanasian Creed.

My principal aim has been to assert the high value of the exposition of the Catholic Faith which is offered to us in this great Confession, and to distinguish between that exposition and the guarding clauses which accompany it. When the Confession was compiled in the fifth or sixth century, the exposition contained nothing that was new, for all its great phrases were well tested and familiar. What was new was the language in which the extreme malediction of God was denounced upon all who do not keep the Faith thus set forth. I have indicated my desire to preserve the exposition for the instruction of the members of our Church, and to release it from the guarding clauses which at present so gravely discredit it.

Since these lectures were delivered, a remarkable

statement has been drawn up by the Bishops of the Southern Convocation, sitting in committee of the whole House. While reaffirming their belief in the doctrines of the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation as set forth in this creed, and recognising that its guarding clauses were intended to express the conviction that a man is responsible in the sight of God for the faith which he holds, they proceed to declare "that in their *prima facie* meaning, and in the minds of many who hear them, those clauses convey a more unqualified statement than Scripture warrants, and one which is not consonant with the language of the greatest teachers of the Church."[1] Whether this utterance will be confirmed and promulgated in the name of the entire episcopate of England remains to be seen: but as an expression of opinion it is gravely important in its bearing on the present situation. For in a large number of churches this creed is now only used in deference to the express requirement of the Bishop, and we can hardly suppose that a Bishop will continue to insist upon the repetition by an unwilling clergyman of words which in their *prima facie* sense are not fully warranted by Holy Scripture. Even if he should feel justified in the interest of Church order in doing so for a time, he will stand pledged to secure some release from so intolerable a situation at the earliest possible moment.

If it be asked what change might advantageously be sought by way of legislation, I would venture to

[1] *Chronicle of Convocation of Canterbury*, 1904, No. 391.

lay stress on two important considerations. First, it is desirable that, if possible, the Church should maintain for the purposes of instruction the strictly credal portion of this Confession of Faith. Secondly, it should be made plain that the Church insists no less firmly than hitherto on the responsibility of the individual for the faith which he holds.

With these considerations in view I would suggest (1) that those portions of the Athanasian Creed which declare "the Catholick Faith" in regard to the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation of our Lord be set forth in the Form which I have given in the Appendix; and (2) that a Note be drawn up stating that whereas when this Confession of our Faith was first set forth it contained certain clauses intended to assert the necessity of a right belief for all who would be saved, and whereas the terms in which this necessity was declared have been a stumbling-block to many members of the Church, it has been thought good to set forth anew, without these clauses, but otherwise unchanged, the Catholick Faith concerning the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation, as most necessary to be believed of every Christian man to his soul's health. If this Form were adopted and followed by such a Note as is suggested, the present Rubric as to recitation might be retained; or it might be so altered as to direct that the new Form be used on certain days, not instead of the Apostles' Creed, but in the place of the Anthem.

As time must needs elapse before this or any

legislative change could be made, it is necessary to say something as to the possibility of a relief to conscience in the meanwhile. I have expressed the belief (p. 65) that "when a rubrical direction has from some reasonable cause become an intolerable burden to conscience, and yet for the time legislation cannot be had in relief, the true ecclesiastical remedy lies in dispensation, and it is the function of the Ordinary to intervene."

It may perhaps be held from the legal point of view that the function of the Ordinary is to see that the services are conducted in accordance with the rubrics, and that, except where it is expressly laid down that he shall use his discretion, he has power to bind but not to loose. Without entering upon a general discussion of the limits of the power of dispensation in the Church of England, I would venture to offer some considerations which bear on the particular matter now before us, craving indulgence for any want of legal precision in the use of terms. It may be observed that the performance of an ecclesiastical act in the Church of England has two kinds of sanction: (1) the pains and penalties attached to a breach of observance by legal enactment; and (2) the censure which follows disobedience to a spiritual superior. This may be illustrated by the direction of the Prayer Book as to daily Morning and Evening Prayer. This direction had come to be regarded as obsolete by the great majority of the English clergy. No legal penalties were likely to be inflicted for the breach of it. But

at the present time it has been enforced again, in many churches in which it would not otherwise be observed, owing to a direct episcopal request which the clergy are unwilling to disregard. This illustrates the practical power of the Ordinary, where law is quiescent. The second sanction avails, though the first is not applied.

In the case of the Athanasian Creed it is almost inconceivable that legal pains and penalties would now be inflicted upon clergymen who refused to recite it. The public conscience would revolt against prosecutions to enforce the recitation. Here, then, law is quiescent; and the second sanction, the requirement of the spiritual superior, alone secures obedience in many instances in which a strong conscientious objection is felt. The withdrawal of the insistence of the Bishop would in such cases be an implicit dispensation.

The principle which I have been endeavouring to state is that in cases where the law is (as I have termed it) quiescent, dispensation, whether explicit or implicit, may at the discretion of the Ordinary rightly be used to release distressed consciences from the second of the two sanctions, so as to remove the sense of disobedience to the living spiritual authority. It is not hereby claimed that the dispensation of the Ordinary should release from legal consequences, if the law should at any time cease to be quiescent and reassert its demand for obedience to the direction in question. Only those cases are at present in view in which the public interest

appears not to require a strict enforcement of a rubrical direction by legal penalties. The principle seems to me to be of importance, and to be capable of application to several matters in which for various reasons the letter of ancient rubrics has come in course of time to be no longer insisted upon by the law, and yet as being the Church's requirement may press upon consciences unless they are relieved by dispensation.

In conclusion, I would say that I am in complete sympathy with those who feel that the warning voice of the Church needs to be heard as loudly now as at any time in the past: but the warning to be effective must be such as appeals to men's consciences as truthful. The warning clauses of the Athanasian Creed do not so appeal to the consciences of the majority of Englishmen ; and for this reason they are not only ineffective, but even perilous.

Westminster Abbey
January, 1905

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE ATHANASIAN CREED

I

THE venerable document which we are accustomed to call the Athanasian Creed enshrines and safeguards a series of doctrinal statements which it speaks of as "the Catholick Faith." It is important to distinguish from the outset between these doctrinal statements and the surrounding clauses by which they are protected; between what I may call the picture itself and the frame in which it is set for its safe-keeping. The frame is rude and strong, the product of a rough age, which valued ascertained truth but had no mind for further speculation. There is no doubt that in the present day the frame does grave injustice to the picture; so much, indeed, that most observers hardly see the picture at all in their preoccupation with the frame. I propose in my first two lectures to unframe the picture

and ask you to consider it on its merits, and in my third lecture to come back to the consideration of the frame.

The document opens, as you well know, with the words, "Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholick Faith: which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly."

That is part of what I have called the frame: what is the picture which it protects? The document proceeds to tell us: "And the Catholick Faith is this." Then follows, in language of remarkable lucidity, a statement concerning the Holy Trinity followed by a statement concerning the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. At the close we come upon the frame once more: "This is the Catholick Faith: which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved." It is the Catholic Faith, then, in regard to the being of God and of Christ, that I ask you to consider now, leaving the guarding clauses till our third lecture.

Before we enter into particulars it will be useful to go back in thought to the Apostolic time and to ask, What was the earliest demand in this matter of faith from those who desired to be saved? We may recall a few familiar passages: "What must I do to be saved? . . .

Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." Or, again: "If thou shalt confess the word with thy mouth that Jesus is Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Moreover, we read in many passages of the Acts of the Apostles, that those who believed at once gave expression to their faith by being baptised "in the name of the Lord Jesus." And St. Paul says: "No man can say Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

"Jesus is Lord." "Believe in the Lord Jesus." These simple formulas summed up the whole matter. This is our first sight of the stream which, as it flows ever onward, becomes at last the broad and deep river of "the Catholick Faith." Many persons at the present time are exceedingly impatient of elaborated formulas, and desire to send us back to the most elementary statements of Christian truth, ignoring the whole process of their subsequent development. You may as well try to force the oak back into the acorn. The Divine revelation is a living thing: it is a seed which grows as soon as it is planted in a congenial soil, and which cannot but grow in accordance with a law contained within itself. The formula, "Jesus is Lord," held within it the future creed of the Church. It could not be wholly understood until the questions were asked and the answers

were given which led to the careful formulation of the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation.

There is indeed but one escape of a rational and intelligible kind from the result of this process of development. It is to declare, as some eminent scholars abroad are now declaring, that the true substance of Christianity consists solely in the recorded words of Jesus Christ as we find them generally in the first three Gospels, and to regard the whole of the teaching of St. Paul and St. John about the Person of our Lord as a subtle corruption which began in the very first age to mar the simplicity of the original Gospel. The religion thus defined and limited includes the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and the duty of universal love; but it excludes the Trinity and the Incarnation, and the Atonement made between God and man through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It rejects the formula "Jesus is Lord"—at any rate, in the full Pauline sense of the words: and rejecting the seed, it can logically ignore the whole of its subsequent growth.

Here I am not concerned to examine this view. It is enough now to say that the Christianity which does not concern itself primarily with the Person of Christ, which can reject the formula "Jesus is Lord," is not the Christianity of the

great teachers of the Apostolic age; it is not the Christianity of the martyrs; it is not the Christianity which conquered the persecuting heathen world.

I come back to this formula, "Jesus is Lord," and ask you to think of its meaning in the light of St. Paul's epistles. "The Lord" was the title which the Jew was accustomed to use in order to avoid the necessity of pronouncing the unutterable name of the Divine Being, when he read his ancient Scriptures. It was his ordinary equivalent for the word which we call "Jehovah," and which occurs nearly seven thousand times in the Old Testament. St. Paul knew full well what he was doing when he applied this title to Christ. He declared that God had given to the risen and exalted Jesus "the Name which is above every name"—that is, the name of "Lord"; and that, as Jehovah had said, "To Me every knee shall bow," so it was ordained that to Jesus "every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord"—not indeed to the depreciation of the one true God, but on the contrary "to the glory of God the Father."

Remember that St. Paul was a Jew, and that Judaism stood for absolute monotheism; for the truth that God is One, and that He is a jealous God who can brook no rival. St. Paul was a Jew, a most learned and most devout Jew, who

had inherited the Jewish doctrine of monotheism, and could as soon have parted with his life as with that supreme truth. Yet it is St. Paul who applies the title and dignity of the Jehovah of the Old Testament to Jesus. He can now say, "Jesus is Lord," and say it "to the glory of God," who is revealed through Jesus Christ His Son under the new name of "the Father."

Nor was this the whole of the mystery concerning the Being of God which was implied by the teaching of St. Paul. Jesus had promised the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the Spirit of God; sometimes called the Spirit of the Father, and sometimes the Spirit of Christ; not an influence, but a Spirit, a Divine Agent. For just as St. Paul speaks of our being "in Christ" and of Christ dwelling in us, so he can speak of our living and walking "in the Spirit," and of the Spirit dwelling in us. The Spirit, too, he speaks of as "the Lord." So that the Father is Lord, and the Son is Lord, and the Holy Spirit is Lord; and yet with St. Paul (who would deny it?) there is but one Lord. St. Paul does not attempt a logical explanation of any kind. He simply records and enforces what were to him the facts of spiritual experience.

From St. Paul we might turn, if time allowed, to St. John, who by an independent spiritual experience reached the same results; exalting in

equal terms Father, Son, and Spirit as Divine Persons, and yet never for a moment supposing, Jew as he too was, that he was dividing the eternal unity of God. But at present we may content ourselves with the witness of St. Paul.

What I have said may help you to understand why St. Paul should declare in so emphatic a manner, "No man can say Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit." Without a spiritual experience to justify it, no man could attain to a conviction of so marvellous a truth. The formula involved so much: to utter it sincerely, to be baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus, and to live accordingly —this was indeed to be a Christian.

At this point a question will arise in the minds of many who have followed me thus far, which I may put into some such words as these: If the formula "Jesus is Lord" implies so much, if baptism "in the name of the Lord Jesus" is spiritually undistinguishable from baptism "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," as it clearly was in the most primitive days, then why should we not be content with so simple a statement of the faith? Why should we not fall back upon this, and eschew the later amplifications, especially when they aim at such a rigorous precision as we find in the doctrinal clauses of the Athanasian Creed? Is not the language which meets us there an unwarrantable

intrusion into the mysteriousness of Divine things; a claim to a knowledge which man cannot truly and certainly have; a parcelling out of the infinite and incomprehensible; and a presentation of human speculations as if they were necessary Divine truth? Is it really needful, or even justifiable, to enter into these minute distinctions? Why may we not be satisfied with words of Holy Scripture, or, at least, with the Apostles' Creed and its simple phrases grouped under the three great heads—"I believe in God the Father," and "in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord," and "I believe in the Holy Ghost"?

First, I would say: Do you think that you can stop people asking such a question as this: If God Almighty have a Son, is His Son God, as truly as He is God? and, if so, are there, or are there not, two Gods? A child can ask a question like that—could you stop men from asking it, especially men of those early days, who were so terribly in earnest that they cheerfully faced death itself rather than offer a few grains of incense to a false god, and rather than renounce their allegiance to Jesus Christ as the Divine Lord of their lives? This question and similar questions were bound to come, and the Christian Church could not escape the necessity of thinking out the various suggested answers and discriminating between them.

Possibly, if Christianity had remained with the Jew and with the kindred Semitic peoples, the strain of such questioning might not have been so intense; for Eastern minds might have accepted the mystery on the ground of spiritual experience, as it came to them, for example, from hereditary monotheists akin to themselves like St. Paul and St. John. But, as a matter of fact, Christianity at once moved westward and entered a new domain of human thought. The Hebrew set the problem to the Greek and Latin world. In that keener intellectual atmosphere questions could not be hushed. The silent contemplation of insoluble mystery was not in accordance with the natural genius of the Western mind; and to the men of the West the Church had come, to make her home with them. There was no looking back. It was vain to sigh, "My own East, how nearer God we were!" The seed was planted in a new soil, and if it was not to perish utterly it must necessarily grow.

A problem then, or rather a whole group of problems, was of necessity propounded by the Apostolic teaching as to the new revelation of God in Jesus Christ. As that teaching passed from Jews to Greeks, it was inevitable that discussion should arise as to the manner in which it should be intellectually conceived. The mind of the Western world had been providentially

trained for the task which was thus set to it. It showed no reluctance to enter upon its task ; and the history of the earlier centuries of Christianity is largely made up of eager and conflicting endeavours to explain and systematise the teaching of the New Testament as to the Being of God and the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. One great teacher after another thought that he had found a solution of the problem, or of some part of it : he believed that he had discovered words in which it could be reasonably expressed. But definitions are always limitations ; and when we are speaking of the infinite and immeasurable Being of God, we become narrow and limited in proportion as we become precise.

Accordingly, the chief part which the Church was called to play all through this period consisted in the refusal of these limiting definitions and narrowing explanations. Her duty was to insist on the fulness of the mysterious teaching which had been committed to her trust. As regards the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, she proclaimed that He was *at once God and man*, *perfect God and perfect man.* Any explanation, however tempting by its apparent simplicity, that implied that He was not completely God must be rejected : and likewise any explanation that implied that He was not completely man. So again, as regards the Three Divine Persons she said :

Their Godhead is one, Their glory is equal, Their majesty is co-eternal: *The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God; and yet they are not three Gods, but one God.*

That was what she had received from the Apostles: no explanation that limited the Godhead of any of the Three Persons could be listened to. It might seem to solve a difficulty here or there, but it limited the truth which she had received and which she lived by. That truth in its fulness she knew and had proved by experience. She could not indeed explain it so as to remove its intellectual difficulty. But she knew that, though itself inexplicable, it explained what could not be explained without it. It justified itself in experience, and she clung to it as to her very life.

This is the history in general of what is called heresy, in contradistinction to what is called the Catholic truth. The heresy—and we will not be too hard on heresy: heresies, it has been said, arise from the wish to understand, and, we may add, from the desire to explain — the heresy offered an explanation of some special difficulty as to the two natures in Christ, or as to the three Persons in the Godhead. The Catholic truth refused the explanation, because it degraded one element or the other in Christ, or because it dishonoured one or other of the Persons of the Trinity.

So it came about that the Church was always saying "No" to the keen minds who evolved subtle explanations and thought they were solving the mystery. One party said: Christ is wholly God, and only in appearance man: that is the solution: that is conceivable, whereas your doctrine is inconceivable. No, said the Church: He is perfect God and perfect man; for, if He be not truly man, His temptations and His sufferings were not real, and so His life and His death could be no help to us. Another said: Christ is truly man; but a man peculiarly inspired by God, so as to be in a unique sense the Son of God: that is a conceivable view, yours is inconceivable. No, said the Church: He is perfect God and perfect man: otherwise it is a demi-god whom we are worshipping, and that were blasphemy.

And so with the truth of the Trinity. Some said: We cannot conceive of three Persons as being one God: we can conceive of one God as manifesting Himself in different modes; so that seen as it were from one side He is Father, from another Son, and from another Holy Ghost; these are but external aspects, or modes of activity, of one Divine Person. No, said the Church: there are three Divine Persons, and yet there is but one God. Another said: If Christ is the Son of God, then He is later in being than God the

Father, as every son is later in being than his father: in other words, "there was once when He was not." No, said the Church; for then He would not have the eternity of God: the Father is eternal, and the Son is eternal; there is no before and after in God.

And so it went on; always a new explanation was suggested, and the great theologians of the Church had to show that the explanation limited the truth, and that the whole mystery must be accepted as alone worthy of the nature of God.

At last, when all the most obvious questions had been asked, and all the most tempting explanations had been offered in response, and had been sternly set aside as limiting the truth and as fertile in new difficulties if pressed to their logical conclusions; then came the time for summing up the results of all these controversies, and setting out in clear language such statements as should guard the future from the errors of the past. For Western Europe this was done in the great Hymn of the Catholic Faith which is now before us. There the old mystery is stated in the plainest terms, involving the sharpest antitheses. Not a phrase that is used is new; each phrase has been tested in the long fight, and has been found needful to protect some portion of the truth. Almost every sentence is the tombstone of a buried error. All the subtle explana-

tions are ruled out: the mystery remains mysterious: God is Three, and God is One; Christ is God, and Christ is man.

It is for this that the Church of to-day has to thank the Church of the first five centuries. They refused to limit the truth: they passed it on with all its inconceivable wonder, as the truth by which they lived, as the light by which they saw, as justified by an ever-accumulating witness of Christian experience. These early fathers were the champions of the integrity of the revelation which came to man through Christ. They would not give up a portion of it because it was difficult to reconcile with the rest. For they recognised that when we try to think of the nature of the Godhead we come up against the inconceivable. God is more than we can measure: God is outside our definitions: God is unlimited, and we can only understand the limited.

The mystery wakens wonder; and wonder is not only, as Plato said, the beginning of philosophy, it is also an indispensable element of worship. Worship has even been described as transcendent wonder. A religion without mystery would not meet the need of our yearning spirits. There must be more to know than we can know here and now. It is by wonder that we advance in knowledge: and wonder is itself a promise.

The wondering child has the light of the future in his eyes. There is an old saying recently brought to light in a fuller form—a saying attributed in early times to Christ Himself, apocryphal indeed, and yet not wholly unworthy to have fallen from His lips: "Let not him that seeketh cease from his search until he find; and when he findeth he shall wonder; wondering, he shall reach the kingdom; and when he reacheth the kingdom he shall have rest."

II

IN my former lecture I attempted to show that the message of the Apostles, based on what they had themselves seen of Jesus Christ and heard from His lips, and also on the facts of their subsequent spiritual experience after He had ascended into heaven, contained elements of startling antithesis, and set a problem of thought to the Western mind as soon as Christianity was accepted by it. "Jesus is Lord" was the formula which first summed up the message; and this formula involved the mystery of the relation between Christ and the Father, and also of the relation between Christ and man. The Apostolic teaching both of St. Paul and of St. John recognised the personal existence and operation of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, while at the same time it everywhere maintained the unity of God. So, too, it recognised the true divinity and also the true humanity of Jesus Christ. Such seeming contradictions necessarily awoke a host of eager questions, and the answers offered by way of explanation were constantly found to limit the

fulness of the truth on one side or the other. The Church's task was to refuse such limitations, and to hand down unimpaired the mysterious wonder of that revelation which she had received from the Apostles, and had tested by the most strenuous experience of life.

It was not that the Church refused to think upon the mystery, or to listen to questionings. Her great teachers, Tertullian, Origen, Athanasius, Augustine, were the strongest intellects of their times. They faced the problems eagerly, and allowed themselves great freedom of speculation. They offered important hints and suggestions in illustration of the Catholic Faith; they showed its reasonable claim on human minds. But they would not abandon a portion of it in the hope of making the rest more easily intelligible. They upheld the mystery of the Three in One, and the mystery of the God-man. Mysterious as the teaching was, it was the deposit which had been handed to their keeping, and it was the very foundation of their spiritual life.

During some four or five centuries all the chief questions which the mysterious truth suggested had been eagerly discussed. Gradually it had become clear that certain assertions must be made to safeguard the integrity of the teaching, and that certain suggested modifications must be refused as being wholly inconsistent with that

integrity. For the Latin world the work of interpretation which Tertullian had begun was completed by St. Augustine; and the Christian phraseology in regard to the Trinity and the Incarnation became definitely fixed. It was the work of the fifth and sixth centuries to make these tested phrases current coin, and that work was mainly accomplished in Southern Gaul, and by the great preachers who sprang from the monastery of Lerins, a small island on the south coast of France.

It was a period of exceptional anxiety. The barbarians were pressing in upon the Latin civilisation. The lamp of knowledge was to burn low in the coming centuries. New races had to be trained and disciplined for Christ, and the missionary task was to leave small space for new intellectual efforts. It was well that the main work of thinking had been accomplished, and that it was just now possible to sum up its results in terms which would secure the fundamental truths. The Catholic Faith could now be stated in well-tested phrases, which should hand down the mystery intact to the next period of active thought.

It is this statement of the Catholic Faith which we have before us in the splendid hymn which sprang into existence at this critical period. I ask you now to look at it, and to underline with

me some of its most notable phrases. And first I would have you observe the word *worship:* "The Catholick Faith is this: that we worship . . ." The word marks the attitude of the Church towards the deep mystery of the Faith. It seems to say at the outset: We cannot wholly understand these things: for they are in their nature higher than the sphere in which we live and think as mortal men. We must look up to them: our true attitude is the upraised face of adoring wonder. "The Catholick Faith is this: that we *worship* one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity." And lest you should think that I lay an undue stress on a single word, look again at the middle of the hymn, where the first portion reaches its close: "So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be *worshipped.*"

The heart of this first section is to be found in words which I have quoted several times already: "So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet they are not three Gods, but one God." All that precedes or follows is but commentary on this central statement. It is this which is more elaborately expressed at the outset by the words, "One God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the Substance." "The Persons" is the term by which we try to express the distinct-

ness of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: "the Substance," or Essence, is the Godhead which They have in common. These are the words which the long experience of centuries has chosen as conveying the most of truth and the least of misconception which human words can convey in such a subject as this. The One-ness in the Three-ness and the Three-ness in the One-ness is to be reverently recognised, if it cannot be adequately explained. We may not confuse the Persons, and we may not break up the one essence or existence of the Godhead.

The words which follow are, for the most part, so plain that no comment can make them clearer. There is one, however, which is sometimes challenged as an incorrect translation of the original Latin. "Incomprehensible" means not to be comprehended within any conceivable limits. The Latin word is *immensus*, or "immeasurable." When we apply such a word to ideas which are beyond space or time it loses its material reference. The thought which it here expresses is that God is absolutely unlimited. When we have said the highest and the deepest that we know of God, immeasurably higher and immeasurably deeper is the undefinable and unutterable Godhead itself. The "incomprehensible" is not the same as the "unknowable," though the words are often confused in popular speech. We

may know, at least in some limited degree, that which we cannot in a strict sense comprehend. It is this thought surely that Browning must be uttering in the words:

> Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
> Or what's a heaven for?

I do not, therefore, quarrel with the translation "incomprehensible." What other word should we prefer? We want something more than "immeasurable," which at once suggests the measures of time or space. We want something clearer than the word "infinite," though that is used for the same Latin word in the *Te Deum* ("the Father of an infinite majesty"): for "infinite" means to most of us little more than indefinitely large. We want to say that the Godhead is beyond the measures of our minds, that it cannot be comprehended or grasped by our limited faculties. We can reach out and touch, as it were, what we cannot grasp in its completeness. We can apprehend, as some have said, what we cannot comprehend.

In speaking of God as the Incomprehensible, we are asserting a great truth, which is needed to deepen our awe and to aid our worship. We are apt to be superficial in our thought and speech about God, and to produce in others the impression that we have an exactitude of knowledge

which serious thinkers feel to be inconsistent with the mysteriousness of the Divine Being. The natural reaction from this irreverent temper of our minds is seen in such a form of belief as has been expressed by that remarkable man whose long and strenuous life has just reached its close.

Mr. Herbert Spencer, in his systematic survey of all objects of knowledge or of thought, was led to postulate an "Unknown Reality" as the First Cause of all phenomena. He firmly believed, if I understand his position aright, in the existence of this ultimate Cause; but he believed also that it lay beyond our knowledge, and so he named it "the Unknowable." He differed from us in his inability to believe that the First Cause had chosen to reveal itself under conditions which rendered some measure of human knowledge possible. We hold that God, who in many portions and in many fashions spoke to men of old, at last revealed Himself yet more manifestly in His Son, that so we might learn some necessary lessons of His Being and His Character. But even so, we do not imagine that the whole Being of God can be comprehended by the mind of man. The very revelation which has been given to us in Christ is full of mysterious difficulties. We know something indeed, but we cannot comprehend; the thing is beyond us. It is too large

for our minds to measure. To us God is not indeed the Unknowable; but yet he is the Incomprehensible. Our common thoughts about God are so utterly unworthy of the "incomprehensible majesty," that we owe a spiritual debt to those earnest seekers after truth who are revolted by our superficiality and easy knowledge, and plunge at any cost into the deep again, determined to assert no more than they can strictly prove. Unconsciously they offer us a gift—at how great a sacrifice we cannot measure—for they teach us, if we will but learn, a new lesson of the greatness and the mystery of the Being whom we worship. We have been ourselves largely to blame if they have isolated this lesson from other lessons which we believe that we have learned.

I have digressed; but you will forgive the digression. For your thoughts must in any case have gone out to that bold and upright English thinker who strove to present the unity of all human knowledge, and whose insistence on the great principle of evolution has profoundly, if sometimes only indirectly, influenced the thoughts of the men of science and of philosophy, of the historians, and not least of the theologians of our time. He saw not the truth as we think we see it; but he devoted his life to the search for truth; and we have been taught that the search for truth is never unrewarded. If we cannot,

perhaps, know that through his "honest doubt," as Tennyson speaks—

> he came at length
> To find a stronger faith his own,

yet we may trust that the Father of incomprehensible majesty, who is also the Father of all mercies, did not forsake His child;

> And Power was with him in the night,
> Which makes the darkness and the light,
> And dwells not in the light alone.*

I return now to the thought of that mysteriousness of the faith which the Church protected against those partial and misleading explanations which were inconsistent with the integrity of the teaching which she had received. It must not be inferred from what I have said on this point that the Church discouraged reverent speculation upon the profound mystery of the Holy Trinity. On the contrary, the early fathers offered many suggestions by way of commending it to intelligent minds. Some of them were crude suggestions, fanciful analogies, which were challenged by other writers and dismissed as perilous or unhelpful. Others were pregnant suggestions, pointing to the necessity of such a teaching, if the Being of God is to be a vivid reality to our minds. But the Church's care has always been to insist on two

* *In Memoriam*, xcvi. Mr. H. Spencer had died shortly before this lecture was given.

things. First, that no suggestion should be allowed to pass into current teaching which tended to lessen the mystery by narrowing the truth. And secondly, that even the most helpful suggestions should not be lifted into articles of faith; for these suggestions have often been the product of the special mode of thinking of a particular period, and they have ceased to be helpful when that mode of thinking has passed away.

What has been done in this way of suggestion in the past may rightly be done with modesty and reverence to-day. Without pretending to offer proof of such a doctrine as that of the Holy Trinity, we may pave the way towards a position from which we may catch some glimpses of the truth, and understand to some extent how it harmonises with what we learn from our own life. In two directions it appears to me that the characteristic thoughts of our time assist us towards an intelligible view of this great mystery of the inner life of God.

1. The first aid comes from the teachings of natural science. The past half-century has been a period of unexampled advance in our knowledge of that strange force which in plants and animals alike we call by the name of *life*. We have learnt much of what life can do, what development it may attain, what a wonderful course it has run. We have learnt to describe it in its manifestations by

Mr. Herbert Spencer's phrases of adaptation to environment, or the continual adjustment of internal relations to external relations. But what is it in itself, and what is its origin? We can trace it where once we did not suspect its existence; we can watch its ordered advance, in accordance with laws which are partly known and partly conjectured, as it climbs the ladder of evolution from the lowest slime to the perfected man. But what life is remains a mystery. We cannot find a real beginning of it; all the life we know is from an antecedent life. We cannot make it where it was not before; we cannot find a bridge to pass from mere mechanical force to vital force. Ultimately life is a mystery, insoluble so far as we can tell.

More than this: as life rises in the scale of evolution, we observe that it becomes more complex. The lowest is the simplest in its activities; the highest offers the strangest variety in unity. Look at man, with his physical vitality and his intellectual vitality—each capable of acting on the other with astonishing effects. Think, moreover, of his self-consciousness; and of his power of checking his desires by his will; and of his capacity for unbounded, even self-sacrificing, love. Think of his imagination and his aspiration, of his powers of faith and hope. His faculties—classify them as you will, bodily, mental, spiritual—so different and yet shading off so imperceptibly

one into the other, are all combined and harmonised in the mysterious unity of a human life. There is a variety in unity, which we could never have anticipated from observing life in its lower forms. It is only our own human experience that enables us to recognise it: and, even so, we are unable to explain it.

What I desire to bring out is this: First, that all life is mysterious, and though we may learn much about its processes and laws, it must, so far as we can see, remain mysterious in itself. Surely this helps us as we approach the mysteriousness of the Divine life. And secondly, that the higher in the scale of life we look, the more marvellous is its complexity without loss of unity. May not this thought help us, as we are confronted with the revelation of a most marvellous complexity within the Unity of the Divine Being? I do not at all wish to urge, as some have urged, that there is a trinity of elements in man which lends support to a belief in the Trinity of Persons in God. I do not press my argument beyond what I think you will allow to be a legitimate conclusion. My point is simply this: just as when we come as high as man in the scale of life we find his being more complex than anything we have observed before, so, if we are to think of the life of God at all, we must expect to find in it a yet more wonderful complexity—a com-

plexity which we cannot hope to comprehend, because we can only think of it and speak of it in terms which are drawn from our own limited experience. If then we ought to expect such higher complexity, it cannot be denied that it is offered to us in no grudging measure by the Christian revelation of Three Divine Persons in One Divine Being. It is beyond our experience, which is limited to human life and to as much of the Divine as can be rendered intelligible through human life. But if we are ready to admit of a life which is higher than our human life, we have no cause to deny, we have every reason to believe, that this higher life will contain a more marvellous variety in unity than our own.

2. I pass on to say a few words in regard to a further aid which comes to us to-day from another branch of human inquiry, namely, the investigations of philosophy. I speak, as before, with no claim to special knowledge more than any intelligent onlooker may have: and I use popular language at the risk of offending the expert. One of the questions which chiefly exercises philosophic thought at the present time is the meaning of personality. What at bottom do you mean when you speak of yourself as a person? We are apt to say offhand that a person is one who is conscious of a separate existence of his own, who knows that he is *not* someone or some-

thing else. But we are warned that this negative mode of definition takes us but a little way. It over-emphasises our separateness, or independence, which is largely illusory.

Let us try, then, for a more positive description of what a person is. One who wills is a person; one who knows is a person; one who loves is a person. But if willing and knowing and loving are spoken of in connection with a person, we imply that there is something on which his will can act, something of which he can have knowledge, something which he can love. Thus we begin to feel that a person cannot be conceived of in isolation; that for his personality to realise itself at all there must be something besides himself.

And, yet further: will at its highest is manifested in its effect on another will; knowledge at its highest is knowledge of persons; love is scarcely more than a metaphor unless the object of love is a person. This last point is the clearest from our own experience. You cannot love a bird, or a dog, quite as you can love a human being. Perhaps you cannot love it at all, except in so far as you attribute personality to it. But in any case it is not on your level of personality; it is not adequate to receive and to return the whole gift of your love.

Now to us the idea of a Personal God includes

at least those elements of personality which we know so well by our experience—will, wisdom, love. Consider in particular the last of these, so strongly emphasised by St. John that he declares twice over, not merely that God loves, but that "God is love." In eternity, let us reverently ask, what does God love? or rather, since love at its highest loves a person, and a person adequate to receive and return the love, In eternity whom does God love? Can we escape from saying, A Person eternal as Himself? for otherwise His love would not be eternal: a Person adequate to receive and return love at its highest: an eternal Person, therefore, not less than God. And here the Christian revelation meets us with the declaration that the Father loveth the Son, and the Son loveth the Father. "Love is not love," it was said long ago in this connection, "if there be no beloved." God is eternally Love: there is an eternal Beloved.

This, then, is a thought which I specially commend to you. To be isolated is not to be a person; to love is to be a person. Personality is not mere separateness: it has even been described as the capacity for fellowship. The Christian truth harmonises with this larger conception of personality, harmonises with it more completely than any other view of the Being of God. Mr. Herbert Spencer argued that, since

all intelligence of which we can conceive presupposes existences objective to itself, it was impossible that there could have existed a Personal God before what we call Creation had come to be. This argument holds as against deism, the doctrine of a single, simple, isolated unit of Deity. It does not hold as against the Christian truth of the Holy Trinity, which declares that within the mysteriously complex Being of God there is from all eternity that which can know and also that which can be known, that which can love and that which can be loved.

Thus we come back to the thought that while the Christian truth is itself beyond our complete comprehension, yet it explains much that cannot be explained without it. And once more we own our obligation of gratitude to those who in early times preserved the integrity of the Catholic Faith.

III

OUR attention in these lectures has been principally directed to the former section of the Athanasian Creed, which deals with the mysterious truth of the Holy Trinity. The latter section sets forth with a like simplicity and directness of language the truth of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, maintaining the mystery of the perfect union of deity and humanity in Christ. The central statement here is found in the words, "Our Lord Jesus Christ . . . is God and Man . . . perfect God and perfect Man." These are the golden words which preserve the mystery intact. We cannot, indeed, conceive how it should be possible to unite in one person the infiniteness of God with the finiteness of man. Yet the Church has never wavered in her declaration that nothing less than the perfect Godhead of Christ could correspond to the lessons of her spiritual experience; nor has she hesitated to assert that His absolutely real manhood is of equally serious importance to her faith.

It is not possible for us now to enter on the

consideration of the union of the two natures, Godhead and manhood, in one Person, or to explain the hope which it offers for the future of the human race. I said something of this in the course of lectures which I gave last Advent under the title of "Some Thoughts on the Incarnation." I must now endeavour to fulfil the promise which I made at the outset, and having spoken, all too inadequately indeed, of the Catholic Faith as it is here pourtrayed, I must proceed to say something also of the frame in which it is set.

It is the monitory or warning clauses, with which it opens and concludes, which have rendered the whole document distasteful to the majority of intelligent Englishmen. "Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholick Faith; which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." I do not think that it is fair to plead that these words are addressed only to the Church's children, as a solemn reminder that they who have been baptised in the faith must keep it to the end. That is not the obvious meaning of the words "Whosoever wishes to be saved," nor of the phrase "every one" in the following clause. They are a world-wide challenge. I can think of no more inclusive words. Certainly when they were written they were intended as a statement of the

universal condition of salvation. They were designed to make it clear to the Arian conquerors of Southern Gaul that in the opinion of the Catholic Church they were on the certain road to perdition. They were very bold words, and they were meant to be absolutely uncompromising. The men who used such language were saying at the same time in their sermons, "He who is not in the unity of the Church, be he clergyman or layman, male or female, free man or slave, shall have no part in the kingdom of God": and what that involved was interpreted by saying that he would rise again in the resurrection with every limb, every bone, every hair of his present body, all strangely endowed with immortality, in order that he might suffer everlasting pains.* There is no possibility of mistaking their meaning. That is what they believed, and that is what they felt bound to say. There is no doubt at all, as a matter of history, that the words were intended to apply to every human soul. "This is the Catholick Faith," so the document ends as it began, "which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved." It is vain to quarrel with the translation. The Latin is not a whit less terrible than the English. They knew what they were saying, and they meant it.

* See Caspari, *Anecdota*, i. 286: a sermon now attributed to Caesarius of Arles.

I would not have you suppose that the whole Church throughout her history had held such tremendous language. The early Greek Fathers in particular had cherished a hope for Socrates and other good heathens, whom they called "Christians before Christ." And Origen reminds us that the Shepherd in the parable seeks His lost sheep "until He find it." But to the time and place to which our document historically belongs such larger thoughts were alien. The peril of heresy was the uppermost idea: its danger to the individual soul as well as to the whole Church was keenly realised. The language in which it found expression was exaggerated; but yet it was honest language at the time to those who used it, and we have no reason to think that it was intended in the least degree to be uncharitable.

It has been asked by those who shrink from this language to-day, and who yet value beyond all price the clear phrases in which the Christian truth is set forth in this document, whether there is any historical ground for thinking that this great exposition of the Catholic Faith ever had a separate existence without these warning clauses. Thirty years ago, when public sentiment was deeply moved in the matter, a Cambridge theologian believed that he had discovered evidence to show that certain parts of the document

had existed separately, and were only combined in their present shape as late as the ninth century. But further discoveries have rendered this interesting position quite untenable, and there is scarcely a single scholar living to-day who would deny that the document as we know it was written as a whole in South Gaul in the fifth or sixth century. There is not now the slightest reason for supposing that it ever existed without these monitory clauses.

It may, however, be rightly said that all the great phrases of that part of the document which describes the Catholic Faith, and to which we attach so high a value, were current before they were brought together here. They had been already minted and circulated as current coin, and were familiar not only to theologians, but to all well-instructed Christians. It is as though the picture, as we called it at the outset, were a mosaic composed of precious stones, each of which had been recognised and valued before it was selected to be combined with the rest in order to give a systematic representation of the Catholic Faith. In this sense it is true to say that the statements of the Faith are older than and independent of the clauses to which exception is taken.

Indeed, it is just this wide currency of the individual phrases that makes it so difficult to

date the creed or to discover its author. So many of its phrases occur in the writings of St. Vincent of Lerins at the beginning of the fifth century that some scholars have maintained that he wrote the creed; while others have held that he knew it already and was quoting from it. Again, so much of it finds a verbal parallel in St. Augustine that scholars have even been tempted to attribute it to him. The fact is that when it was set forth it was not intended to seem new. Every theologian, as he read that portion of it which describes the Catholic Faith, recognised that it was the old faith set out in the old and approved language with which his reading had long made him familiar.

The most recent effort of criticism to assign a date and possible author to the document is that of a learned Benedictine scholar in Belgium.* He has shown that its Latinity corresponds in a striking manner to the style of Caesarius, a great Gallican Bishop, who was once a monk at Lerins, the chief centre of theological learning in those days, and whose episcopate falls between 503 and 543. The language of the introductory and closing sentences finds frequent parallels in the sermons of this most popular and effective preacher. Caesarius was not an original thinker,

* Dom Morin, of Maredsous, in *Revue Bénédictine*, October, 1901.

but he was a well-read practical theologian, who had learned what the Catholic Faith was, and knew how to present it in the settled phraseology and to enforce it with the most emphatic warnings. It is too early to pronounce a judgment on the view that the creed belongs to the period of Caesarius and may even have been compiled by him; but there is much to be said in its favour.

I turn from these historical topics to the practical question of the use of this ancient document in the public services of the English Church. I have contrasted the beauty and preciousness of the picture with the repellent character of its frame. I need not dwell on the change in Christian conviction which has made it exceedingly difficult for an educated believer to read over this detailed statement of the Catholic Faith, and then to say, "Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." We have learned much of the wideness of God's mercy since those words were written. We are not now prepared to say that even heathen men who hold nothing of the Catholic Faith, who have never heard of it at all, must without doubt perish everlastingly. And we are confident that many of our own countrymen who through intellectual failings "confuse the persons" or "divide the essence" of the Godhead will nevertheless find their love

of Christ answered by His love for them. While we desire to hold the Catholic Faith with the same tenacity as the great teachers of the fifth and sixth centuries, we cannot reaffirm their language as to the certain damnation of all who fail to hold it as it is here set forth.

Why, then, do we go on repeating the words? The answer is in part historical. The creed has been known and valued in the English Church for more than twelve hundred years. Picture and frame alike are an heirloom of immense antiquity. The Bishop-elect of Worcester in the year 798 presented to the Archbishop of Canterbury a confession of faith prior to his consecration, which contains many clauses of this creed. Since he desired to be brief he does not cite the whole, but he begins with the words, "Whosoever will be saved before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholick Faith," and proceeds to add, "and the Catholick Faith is this: that we worship . . ." and so forth. In the tenth century we find that it was sung antiphonally in England, and it was soon translated into Anglo-Saxon for the instruction of the people. It belonged to the ancient office of Prime; but at the time of the Reformation it was given its present place in the Prayer-book and ordered to be sung or said at Morning Prayer on six great festivals in the year, the number being raised to thirteen in the Second

Book of Edward VI. For 350 years the English Church has required its recital at one of the principal services of her greatest festivals; and though some of her divines have challenged the wisdom of this practice in almost every generation, she has not changed her order, though it has come to conflict with the consciences of an ever-growing number of her children.

The reason for this ultra-conservatism is two-fold. In the first place, the Church values so highly the exposition of the Faith which this document contains, as a summary of the thoughts of her greatest teachers expressed in firm and lucid language, that she has been unwilling to remove from her public services so powerful an instrument of popular instruction. The value of the picture has been set against the repellent character of the frame.

Secondly, the clogged condition of the legislative machinery of the Church has made it almost impossible for the Church herself to revise the orders which she gave 350 years ago. The common mind of the Church has no adequate means of making itself effectively heard. This is only a particular instance of the general condition of paralysis from which in this respect the body of the Church is suffering. We need not blame Parliament here, for we have never got as far as Parliament in this matter. We must blame

our own timidity, and especially our suspicion of one another, which makes us fear that if a single rubric were altered the whole Prayer-book would be liable to change. These are, indeed, unworthy fears—utterly unworthy of a living Church, whose duty is to step forward boldly where the truth leads.

What, then, is the wisest policy for the Church to adopt at the present time? Are we to go on saying these awful words, and explaining when we are pressed that we do not really mean what we say? that we use them only in a broad and charitable sense as a solemn warning to those who wilfully reject the truth? But, alas! it is the words, and not our interpretation of the words, that we are bound to say and to call upon our congregations to say. Or should we aim at such legislation as would withdraw the creed from public use and consign it to the position of seclusion which it holds in the Roman communion, where it is practically used only by monks and priests in the service of Prime on Sundays? The American Church and the Irish Church have both withdrawn it from public use, and there are many English Churchmen who would desire to do the same.

Or is there a middle course by which the picture may be preserved without its compromising frame? The suggestion which I venture to

offer is this: that the creed should no longer be said in the place of the Apostles' Creed; but that its unequalled exposition of the truths of the Trinity and the Incarnation should be separated from the rest of the document and sung in the place of the anthem. It is, of course, always legitimate to take a selection of words from the Bible or Prayer-book for use as an anthem; and few would deny that by adopting this course the spirit of the present rubric is honoured, though its letter is not complied with. This, I believe, is the best solution of the difficulty even now, where proper authority can be had for it; and I think that we should aim at getting the Church to alter her order in some such sense as this.

Meanwhile—for I can hardly avoid the question—what is to be done by individual clergymen and congregations, who feel that the present position is intolerable? As it is, they have largely taken the matter into their own hands, and in very many churches, as you know, this creed is never said at all, and in many more it is said but once a year. This is anarchic, and anarchy is deplorable. I venture with all modesty to submit that in the case of parish churches the Bishop, as supreme Ordinary of the diocese, is alone in a position to meet the present need. In cases where rules press hardly and where legislation cannot at once be had, dispensation, as a

temporary measure of relief to troubled consciences, is the true method of the Church. I am confident that the Bishops would be supported by the general conscience of English Churchmen, if they boldly put this principle into operation for the relief of clergy and laity where the burden is felt to be seriously oppressive. And even where a Bishop might hesitate to take so bold a step, I should still venture to hope that he might see his way to say to any clergyman who at present on account of strong conscientious objection never uses the creed at all, "While I do not feel able to sanction your omission of the creed, yet, if your conscience really forbids you to recite it, I would urge you at any rate not to deprive your people of the great teaching which it contains. The alternative of using the substance of it as an anthem, though irregular, is in every way preferable to your present course of entire omission."

I speak with a sense of deep responsibility in a grave matter which affects, as no other does to the same extent, on the one side our obedience to a plain rule, and on the other side our truthfulness of utterance in the solemn act of worship. Every clergyman is bound to obey the rubrics of the Prayer-book "except so far as shall be ordered by lawful authority." I believe that this "lawful authority" for making

exceptions in urgent cases is lodged in what I have called the supreme Ordinary of the particular Church. Such authority is exercised not unfrequently already in regard to rules of less importance. I plead for its exercise to afford temporary relief until the Church can by legislation remove what is very widely felt as a burden on the conscience of her earnest and law-abiding sons.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE ON SUNDAY, JUNE 5TH, 1904

"NO man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us" (1 St. John iv. 12).

The festival of Trinity, the octave of which we keep to-day, is the festival of the knowledge of God, which is our eternal life. It sums up for us all that the Christian revelation has taught us about God. Christmas, Easter, Pentecost—each in turn contributes to our knowledge of God. Christmas declares to us the Father, who gives us His Son; Easter declares to us the Son, who in our human flesh has vanquished sin and death. Pentecost declares to us the Holy Spirit, who comes to dwell in us and build us up together into a temple of God. Then Trinity lifts our thoughts away from ourselves and from what God has done for us to what God is in Himself, and bids us praise Him for what He is, and say: Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole

earth is full of His glory: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to Holy Ghost: for the Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet they are not three Gods, but one God.

There is nothing which we need so much to-day as a noble and inspiring conception of God. The conception of God has undergone a great change in recent times. In the first half of the nineteenth century the prevailing thought was that God was a Sovereign Ruler and Judge, before whom men must give a solemn account, from whose stern justice which must condemn us all the merciful Jesus had found a way to deliver us. Thus a contrast was made between the sternness of God and the love of Christ. Imperfect as was this view of God, it had one important advantage: the name of God was a name of fear and awe. Our fathers were brought up "in the fear of God." On the memorial of a great Indian administrator in Westminster Abbey there is written: "He feared man so little, because he feared God so much." That marks the height of this feeling, which has been on the wane ever since. It was stern, and it made strong men—men who feared God and did their duty.

But it had another effect on many minds. It was repellent to less heroic souls. It presented a severe view of God. It seemed to leave little

room for the love of God. And presently by its side a new conception arose: the conception of our Lord's parable in which the father sees his prodigal son a long way off, and runs to meet him, and falls on his neck, and welcomes him home in spite of all. That God was a Father to men flashed out like a new discovery. A speaker in Parliament actually referred with admiration to "what had recently been called, in beautiful language, the fatherhood of God." The term is now so familiar to us that we find it difficult to imagine that fifty years ago it could strike men as new. It was an old truth that had slept and awaked; and when once pointed out it was seen to be everywhere in the New Testament. Had not Christ said, "The Father Himself loveth you"? Had He not taught us to pray, "Our Father . . . give us our daily bread, forgive us, deliver us"? The result of this new proclamation of the love of God was to attract many souls whom the sterner aspect had discouraged. A Christian poet, one of my predecessors,* sang:

> I say to thee, do thou repeat
> To the first man whom thou mayest meet
> In lane, highway, or open street—
> That he and we and all men move
> Under a canopy of love
> As broad as the blue sky above.

* Richard Chevenix Trench.

It is true—eternal truth—that God is love. But it was easily misinterpreted in an unworthy sense by those who could not distinguish between love and mere goodnature. For those who did not know that in reality we fear most the person whom we love most and who loves us most—that reverence and love are inseparable: for those who could not understand that love is very jealous and demands complete surrender, and therefore that the holy love of God is awful and constraining: for such the notion grew that God was too kind to punish. The fear of God was weakened: the strain of duty was relaxed: a softness came over religion; it might attract, but it had lost its power to compel.

We are told to-day that, in spite of all our efforts (and never have the efforts been so great) to make religion attractive, its hold on all ranks of society is weakening. If this is so, and I fear that it is, the remedy is not to be found in any change of methods, but only in a larger and nobler conception of God. In the knowledge of God standeth our eternal life.

The festival of Trinity invites us to contemplate God as He is. It assures us that He is not a mere force of inflexible righteousness, that must bear down in the end all that opposes it. It assures us that He is not a barren singleness, isolated in lonely grandeur,

looking down from a height on puny mortals, either to mark what is done amiss, or to smile with indulgence at our human weaknesses: but that He is eternally in Himself a being of love: an eternal Father loving and loved by an eternal Son: a life of love within Himself, which is realised in an eternal Spirit, the Spirit of fellowship. God is love: from all eternity He finds within Himself an object to which His love goes forth, the Son who loves Him in return: and this love of Father and Son has been from all eternity realised in and shared by a Third Person, the Holy Spirit of fellowship, who is one with the Father and the Son.

We cannot indeed understand it: it is too hard for us. "No man hath seen God at any time." It is the mystery of mysteries. But the mystery makes clear what would otherwise be beyond comprehension in our own lives. We find it hard to see how Three Persons can be One. And yet, if we know anything of ourselves, we know that each of us, though a single person, is always yearning to come into nearer relation with other persons. We want to enter into other lives. We cannot live alone. We feel that isolation is death. We are made for love; and love is the giving of ourselves to others, the losing of our life in others' lives, and the receiving back the lives of others into ours. Nearer and nearer

we seek to come to those we love. The highest love is the completest union of the persons who love. And all this is so because we are made in the image of God, and God is love. In God that is realised for which we yearn, towards which we strain, and which we necessarily fail to reach—the unity of persons in perfect love: Three Persons in One God.

We have on earth a pattern of the life of God in the unity of a true family. In the family each lives for the other, each gives his own life in some measure to the rest, and in doing so finds his own true life again richer than before. The family is a perpetual effort after oneness. The perfect ideal of family life is in heaven. In God there is Father and Son, and They are One. God *is* the unity which we strive to be. Here is our hope. Our longing to enter into the lives of others, to get away from the death of selfishness into the life of sacrifice, is due to that which is of God in us. And because it is of God it shall yet be realised. We are made for oneness—oneness with our brother men, oneness with God Himself. God in Christ has made Himself one with man, pouring out His life for us and into us; and man shall at last be made one in Christ and taken up into God.

We cannot understand it. It is the mystery of the life of God. But it interprets our deepest

yearnings. We must love: for God is love, and we are in the image of God. And God loves us; that is to say, He goes out towards us, yearns after oneness with us, cannot be satisfied until we return His love.

If we could grasp and hold this thought of God, our lives would be a ceaseless endeavour to respond to every call of love. So writes St. John, the apostle of love: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us."

It is to protect the mysteriousness of the truth about the being of God, and to guard us from easy and inadequate explanations, that doctrinal formularies are perpetually needed. The justification of such formularies in the present day is to be found alike in the historical enquiry into their origin, and in the exposition of their compatibility with modern modes of thinking. Men would not talk lightly of the elaborated exactness of the Athanasian Creed, if they were familiar with the controversies which long ago minted the phrases which this formulary keeps in circulation. They would understand that this was no *tour de force* of a single mind, no first attempt to propound a mysterious system of doctrine and to force it upon the Christian consciousness; but that, on the contrary, it was a summary of

positions gradually reached by the long process of discarding false answers to questions which, once raised, could not be dismissed without reply. All its familiar phrases had been hammered out by disputation long before they were gathered together into this great Confession. It was nothing new that was offered to men's acceptance. This was the Catholic Faith: it was recognised as being such; and we recognise it as being such to-day. That is the historical line of defence. The creed was not the fine-spun product of a mind which was ensnared by the delusion of systematic completeness: it was a simple recitation of the results reached by the great Christian thinkers from Athanasius to Augustine.

The further justification of our doctrinal formularies lies in their applicability to new situations of thought at any period. When we have done our best to think out the doctrine of the Incarnation and to express it in terms which correspond with the present tenor of our thinking, we feel satisfied that no statement can so fully guard the mystery as the great clause, "Perfect God and perfect Man," and we are more than ever thankful that these simple words are current coin. Again, while we fancy that the new philosophical conception of personality helps us to understand that in God personality is found in its highest realisation, in which distinction

of persons does not necessarily involve separation, we rejoice anew in the simple greatness of the antithesis which declares: "So the Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God: and yet they are not three Gods, but one God." And we feel that so long as those words ring out in English ears, we are safeguarded at once from tritheism and from a Sabellian view which contradicts what we have learned of the inner life of love within the being of God. It is for these and other great phrases of the Athanasian Creed that I value its public recitation in our congregations, and that I should deplore a change which would thrust it into a corner out of common knowledge. If it still stood in the Prayer-book, but with no rubric for its use, it would soon be as unfamiliar to most of us as the Prayers for use at Sea.

The practical problem of the recitation of this creed is once more before the consideration of the Church. An honoured bishop has declared in Convocation that its present use is productive of "more harm than good." And during the past week the Archbishop of Canterbury has been approached by a small but important deputation, led by a distinguished son of this University, who pleaded in language of admirable caution for some mitigation of the present obligation. The Archbishop's reply was characteristic and encouraging.

He recalled the past efforts made in this direction, and fixed attention upon the real objection which makes the recitation of this creed intolerable to many minds. It was especially satisfactory to observe that he did not consider that its doctrinal statements of the Catholic Faith were inseparable from those terrible warnings which condemn the misbeliever to eternal ruin.

There are hundreds of churches at the present moment in which inability to recite these clauses with a good conscience has caused the entire disuse of the creed. I could wish that, until legislation might be had, the Ordinary of the diocese, even if he felt unable to sanction the omission, would yet declare that the spirit, if not the full letter, of the Church's direction would be honoured by singing in the place of the anthem those portions of the Athanasian Creed which set forth the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. This is the course which as Ordinary I have felt bound to take in a church in which there is no episcopal jurisdiction to relieve me of the ultimate responsibility of decision. I can no longer say, or require others to say, clauses which I believe to be in their plain sense not only misleading, but false. We therefore omit the Athanasian Creed on the appointed days, and say the Apostles' Creed in its place: but the great utterances of the Catholic Faith in regard to the

Holy Trinity and the Incarnation are sung entire and without change, and with more than the usual solemnity, in the place of the anthem. This procedure on its positive side is of course as fully legal as the singing of any words of Holy Scripture or of the Prayer-book in the form of an anthem. I do not dispute the technical illegality of the omission of the creed at the prescribed place. But I hold that where a rubrical direction has from some reasonable cause become an intolerable burden to conscience, and yet for the time legislation cannot be had in relief, the true ecclesiastical remedy lies in dispensation, and it is the function of the Ordinary to intervene. This is frequently done in the case of other directions of the Prayer-book which are no less explicit, and where there is far less justification for intervening on the ground of moral pressure.

I have felt that it was due to those with whom I have worked for so many years in this place that I should take this opportunity of explaining the actual character of a deviation from rubrical practice which has sometimes been represented as other than that it is. I venture to add that in the present reopening of the whole question it would be of service that Cambridge opinion, both clerical and lay, should find some means of public utterance. For it will be a very grave injury to the Church if the history of thirty years ago be

allowed to repeat itself. We are bound to insist that the Church shall now, in the light of all that God has taught us, refuse to give her sanction any longer to the words, "which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." It ought not to be possible to-day to point to these words as the authorised utterance of the Church. In their plain sense they were believed once: in their plain sense they are disbelieved now. No one should be allowed to repeat them in the Church's name.

At the same time, for reasons which I have already given, and for the further reason that it should not be open to any man to suggest that the Church is receding from the exposition of the Faith itself, it is of great importance that the substance of the creed should continue to be recited by our congregations. By the substance of the creed I mean those portions only which deal with the Trinity and the Incarnation, apart from all the eschatological statements which are superadded to emphasise the danger of rejecting the Faith.

I turn from this controversial topic to remind you that your offerings are asked for the sacred and peculiarly Christian cause of the hospital of this town. I will not urge its pressing need of

funds, or its special claim on the University as a school of medicine. I plead to-day the love of God which finds expression in the love of man. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God . . . for God is love."

ON THE PROPOSAL OF A NEW TRANSLATION

(*London Diocesan Conference, June* 4, 1901)

I DO not myself share the dissatisfaction frequently expressed in regard to our present version of the Athanasian Creed. The fathers of the Church in the sixteenth century were peculiarly well versed in Augustinian Latin, and no one will question their power of expressing their meaning in appropriate English. I will take two of the points which have been specially referred to. It has been suggested that *Quicunque vult salvus esse* would be better rendered, "Whoever willeth to be in a state of salvation," or to be "safe" or "perfectly whole." A distinction is thus sought to be made between *salvus esse* and *salvari*. But a study of Christian Latin leaves, in my opinion, no room for doubting that these phrases are identical in meaning. *Salvus esse* is classical Latin, *salvari* is low Latin; they are constantly interchanged in the versions and in the manuscripts. Those who still read their St. Augustine may remember that he apologises for the use of the convenient word

salvari. I believe, therefore, that *salvus esse* can only be rightly translated "to be saved."

The second point I would mention is the rendering of *immensus* as "incomprehensible." The word *immensus* conveys the idea that the Divine nature cannot be measured by any measures which we can apply to it, and cannot be grasped in its completeness by our human faculties. No word expresses this to the scholar's mind more completely than "incomprehensible"; but it may be that to the popular mind "incomprehensible" only expresses a portion of the truth. That portion of the truth, I believe, we are more ready to admit now than our fathers were twenty-five years ago: I mean the incomprehensibility (even in the more modern sense) of the nature of the Divine Being. Yet if "infinite" should be thought to be a better word for to-day I should be ready to accept it.

Taken as a whole, the present version admirably represents the meaning of the original framers of the formula. The intention of the Church of the fifth century was to condemn in the severest language those who departed from a certain intellectual standard of doctrine, which she had laboriously elaborated as a safeguard against heresies. The temper of the time is photographically reproduced in those magnificent anathemas. No translation can soften what was meant to be as hard as adamant. You may say, "let him thus think" for "he must thus think of the Trinity"; but that will not relax the stringency of the next words, "Furthermore it is necessary to

everlasting salvation." Nor will it affect the singularly expressive admonition of the second clause of the creed, "which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly."

If retranslation is offered as a solution of the problem, I will resist it, for it suggests that the difficulty lies where the difficulty does not lie. And it means that the Church in the twentieth century solemnly reaffirms in a more modern dress the anathemas of the fifth century, which we tolerate only as part of an historical record, and do not desire to utter anew as our own.

APPENDIX

A HYMN OF THE CATHOLICK FAITH

Fides Catholica

THE Catholick Faith is this : That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity ;

Neither confounding the Persons : nor dividing the Substance.

For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son : and another of the Holy Ghost.

But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one : the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son : and such is the Holy Ghost.

The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate : and the Holy Ghost uncreate.

The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible : and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.

The Father eternal, the Son eternal ; and the Holy Ghost eternal.

And yet they are not three eternals : but one eternal.

As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated : but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible.

So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty : and the Holy Ghost Almighty.

And yet they are not three Almighties : but one Almighty.

So the Father is God, the Son is God : and the Holy Ghost is God.

And yet they are not three Gods : but one God.

So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord : and the Holy Ghost Lord.

And yet not three Lords : but one Lord.

For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity : to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord;

So are we forbidden by the Catholick Religion : to say there be three Gods, or three Lords.

The Father is made of none : neither created, nor begotten.

The Son is of the Father alone : not made, nor created, but begotten.

The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son : neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons : one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.

And in this Trinity none is afore, or after other : none is greater, or less than another;

But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together : and co-equal.

So that in all things, as is aforesaid : the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.

Furthermore the right faith is that we believe and confess : that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man;

God, of the Substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds : and Man, of the substance of his Mother, born in the world;

Perfect God, and Perfect Man : of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting;

Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead : and inferior to the Father, as touching his Manhood.

Who although he be God and Man : yet he is not two, but one Christ;

One ; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh : but by taking of the Manhood into God ;

One altogether; not by confusion of Substance : but by unity of Person.

For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one Man : so God and Man is one Christ.

Who suffered for our salvation : descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead.

He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty : from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son : and to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be : world without end. Amen.

[The Form here proposed ends with the words, " to

judge the quick and the dead." The reasons for this are:—

(*a*) This is the natural close of the exposition of the doctrine of our Lord's Incarnation, and corresponds exactly with the close of the second section of the Apostles' Creed.

(*b*) The words which follow in the original, "At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give account for their own works: And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire," are of an eschatological character, and were doubtless introduced to explain and emphasise the terms of the monitory clauses, "perish everlastingly," "cannot be saved." The doctrine of the General Resurrection is out of place otherwise at this point; for it belongs to the third and not to the second section of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. When the monitory clauses are removed the words do not form an appropriate close to the Confession. The juxtaposition of the words "everlasting fire," and the "Gloria Patri" would be somewhat painful.

(*c*) It is true that this language is largely taken from Scripture; but in Scripture such statements are balanced by others which point to a final issue in which God shall be "all in all." It may not be in our power to reconcile the two sides of the antithesis, but it is misleading to emphasise one without any reference to the other.]

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